

**SURVIVAL FACTORS GROUP  
INTERVIEWS  
ATTACHMENT #1  
(18 Pages)**

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
LAKERA CARTER**

DATE: November 21, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Hospital

PRESENT: Lakera Carter, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and  
Paula Sind-Prunier

The witness is a student at Lee High School, and attends classes at the Huntsville Center for Technology. Her DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and she resides at \_\_\_\_\_. Her home telephone number is (256) \_\_\_\_\_. She is 5' tall and weighs 107 lbs.

The witness states that the students were talking on the school bus when it went up on the rail and flipped over. She states that everyone was flying around. She woke up in the hospital. She advised investigators that she didn't see the other vehicle, and states that when they went up on the rail, they had no time to do anything. She screamed, "I want my mamma."

She noted that Tanesha Hill usually sits up in the front seat, and Nicole Ford also sits in the front seat.

She explained that there are usually two buses, and she took this bus because the other driver is too slow. She states that Larita, the usual bus driver, drives fast. She believes that Larita was driving at the time of the accident and said that she got on the first bus because she thought the 2<sup>nd</sup> bus would be full.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
SAMANTHA HORTON**

DATE: November 21, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Hospital

PRESENT: Samantha Horton, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski  
and Paula Sind-Prunier

The witness is a student at Le \_\_\_\_\_, and attends classes at the Huntsville Center for Technology. Her DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and she resides at \_\_\_\_\_. Her home telephone number is (256) \_\_\_\_\_. She is 5'9" tall and weighs 190 lbs.

The witness states that she was seated in the aisle towards the middle, with a boy next to her. She said that Mookie [phonetic] was seated by the window in front of her and David [Joe Davidson] was in the aisle seat beside Mookie. Across the aisle, Corey Jones and Luwanda Jefferson were seated across the aisle, with Corey by the window.

She recalled that Tanesha Hill and Nicole Ford were both seated in the front seat, and that Crystal McCrary sits behind Ford. In front of Mookie and David [Joe Davidson] was Seville Briggs . Yolanda Moore always sits in the back.

Ishakey Bennett was three rows behind her. Christina (?) also sits toward the front.

She first remembers the bus going from side to side. The bus had gone out of control, and she hit the roof with her arms, and then hit the ground. She woke up and Cory Jones pulled her up. He handed her to someone else out the back of the bus. An ambulance came and she was put on a stretcher.

She told investigators that she usually rides the first bus she sees, and noted that the driver of the accident bus was not her usual driver, although she had driven with him before. Lolita is the bus driver, usually. She complained that the bus drivers can't drive. She states that the students are scared to ride on the buses. She noted that there's one bus that all the louder kids usually ride on.

### **RECORD OF INTERVIEW NEQUAISHA BLAND**

DATE: November 21, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Hospital

PRESENT: Nequaisha Bland, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and Paula Sind-Prunier

The witness is a student at the Center for Technology. Her home telephone number is \_\_\_\_\_ and weighs 150 lbs.

and attends classes at the Huntsville, and she resides at \_\_\_\_\_. She is 5'3" or 5'4" tall and

The witness states that she was in the fifth row, next to Charles. had her head down. She heard Crystal McCrary saying, "Oh my God! Oh my God!" Then, she remembered people laying all around. She doesn't know where she ended up or how she got out. She believes she might have been in the 5<sup>th</sup> row on the left side. She notes that someone told her they yelled for the driver to slow down. She states that everyone on the bus was just talking prior to the accident, and that she rides the bus all the time. She states that she's always scared when they drive because they're up high and the buses drive fast. She recalled one time where the driver asked the students which route they'd like to take, but usually, they take the route they were driving at the time of the accident. She said that the bell rings at 10:00 a.m. and they board the bus around 10:05 a.m. The bus arrives at the Tech Center around 10:15 or 10:20 a.m.

She states that there are buses with seatbelts, but they are only lapbelts. No one uses them because they believe they are unsafe.

She sustained a fracture of her right arm, a ruptured spleen and also fractured 5 or 6 vertebrae.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
KYLE ROSE, JR.**

DATE: November 21, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Hospital

PRESENT: Kyle Rose, Jr., witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and Paula Sind-Prunier

The witness is a student at Lee High School, and attends classes at the Huntsville ology. His DOB is , and he re , AL 35810. His home telephone number is . He is 5'11-1/2" tall and weighs 175 lbs.

The witness is unsure whether he was in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> row. He was in front of Niguaisha Bland. Anthony Moore was in front of him, and Angela Hill was behind him. He believes the seat across the aisle from him was empty. He was sitting with another guy. He recalls seeing Nicole by the aisle and Tanesha Hill behind the driver near the aisle. Willie Danton was by the window, beside her. He states that Trey Wright usually sits way in the back.

He said that a car hit the bus on the right side. He didn't see the car actually hit, but saw it change direction outside the window. He said he heard a "boom" and then the bus swerved. The bus swerved right and then left. Then, the bus hit the side and flipped. He states that he ducked down in his seat when he saw they were going over. He hit his neck and caught his neck on the seat. He hit the left side of his ribs on the seat. He states that he went out the front by crawling over people, and he flopped out onto the ground. At the time he exited, no one (e.g., emergency responders) was there yet. His friend called him on the phone and then someone grabbed the phone to begin calling parents.

He states that the bus had swerved right and then left. It was as if everything was in slow motion. He says that he was looking around, like, "What's going on?" He says he heard a "boom" and the bus started swerving, and then the bus began raising up. He grabbed onto the seat when he felt it get light under his feet. He states that, following the accident, he just laid down because his chest hurt.

He sustained a lacerated spleen, bruised ribs, and bruised lungs, as well as bruises to his left shoulder. He states that the ambulances arrived quickly. He recalled that Anthony Moore got out the front ahead of him. He had seen Anthony lying on his back when the bus came to rest.

He states that he usually doesn't drive that bus, and instead takes the second.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
LAKYRA ELLIOTT**

DATE: November 21, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Hospital

PRESENT: Lakyra Elliott, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and  
Paula Sind-Prunier

The witness is a student at Le \_\_\_\_\_ attends classes at the Huntsville  
Center for Technology. Her DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and she resides at  
\_\_\_\_\_. Her home telephone number is (256) \_\_\_\_\_. She is 5'3" tall  
and weighs 110 to 114 lbs.

The witness states that there was an orange car behind the bus. She was looking out the back window. She saw that the car was really close to the bus, and yelled to others that it was really close. She states that the car started to pass the bus. She states that the car later hit the bus in the front. The bus started swerving and she fell into the aisle. She woke up on the ground outside the bus. She doesn't know how she got out of the bus.

She identified the driver of the car as "Tony." She states that she and Yolanda Moore had commented how close he was to the bus, and then he sped up and passed alongside and hit the bus, then the bus started swerving. She thought he was speeding or racing somebody. She heard no unusual noises before the impact. She states that she saw Tony in the car when they were leaving school. She said it was quiet until just before the collision, but that students started yelling at the time of the collision. She noticed nothing unusual about the bus driver, and had not spoken with Tony before they left the school.

She sustained abrasions to her forehead, fractured four vertebrae, tore a ligament in her left thumb, fractured two ribs on her right side, and possibly tore a ligament in her left knee. She also sustained abrasions to her scalp and back.

She states that she drives this bus because the others drive too fast. Lorita, the regular bus driver, drives too fast, so she won't drive with her anymore. She lost her glasses on the bus and requested assistance in securing their return, even if damaged.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
PATRICE GOPHER**

DATE: November 22, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Hospital

PRESENT: Patrice Gopher, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and  
Paula Sind-Prunier

The witness is a student at Lee High School, and attends classes at the Huntsville  
Center for Technology. Her DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and she resides at \_\_\_\_\_

, AL. Her home telephone number is . She is 5'4" tall and weighs 154 lbs.

The witness states that she was seated by the emergency window. She always sits in the seat behind the emergency window, perhaps the 5<sup>th</sup> row on the right. Deanna Mitchell sat with her at the window. She was near the aisle. Joe Davidson was seated behind Deanna. She thinks that Ishakey Bennett was in the 5<sup>th</sup> row on the left side.

She usually takes the second bus, but it wasn't there yet, so she boarded the first. The students on the bus were talking and laughing. She turned to talk to Kim Roundtree, and the bus started swerving and they flipped. She saw an orange car swerving, too. She tried holding on to Deanna Mitchell, but the bus shifted and she couldn't hold on to her. The bus flipped and she ended up in the second row on the left. She states that she hit her head on the window and fell on the floor of the bus, atop Lakera Carter. She pulled herself up and walked out the back of the bus. Corey Jones helped her out, and then the fire department helped her out the rear door.

She sustained sprains to her legs, and a fractured left wrist, nine stitches in her head, and a cervical fracture. She was wearing a backpack on her back, but it only had one book in it. This was her first time on that bus, because the bus she usually took was late.

She wanted to take the second bus, the one with seat belts. She decided, instead, to get on the first bus because it was cold. The second bus pulled up as they left. She said the students were talking and laughing on the bus as usually, but there was no rowdiness.

## **RECORD OF INTERVIEW YOLANDA MOORE**

DATE: November 22, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Hospital

PRESENT: Yolanda Moore, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and Paula Sind-Prunier

The witness is a student at Le , and attends classes at the Huntsville Center for Technology. Her DOB is , and she resides at \_\_\_\_\_. Her home telephone number is (256) \_\_\_\_\_. She is 5'4" tall and weighs 180 lbs.

The witness states that she saw an orange car coming up alongside the school bus. She believes it was passing the school bus. She states that the car swerved and hit the front of the bus. The bus swerved and went up on an angle and then flipped over and hit the ground. She states that she hit her chest on the seat in front of her and hit her head on the ceiling. She ended up the floor in the same seat. Someone helped her up and she went out the back door.

She states that she usually drives with a female bus driver, but has driven with the accident driver before. She states that she likes the female bus driver better, and that it is not Lorita. She states that Lorita speeds, but the woman she usually drives with does not.

She sustained a lacerated spleen, fractures to her right foot, a sprained right ankle, and 3 fractured vertebrae in the lumbar and thoracic regions.

She states that all of the students on the bus were calm prior to the orange car's collision with the bus.

### **RECORD OF INTERVIEW JOE DAVIDSON**

DATE: November \_\_, 2006\*

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

PRESENT: Joe Davidson, witness; NTSB Investigator Ronald Kaminski  
\_\_\_\_\_r

The witness is a student at Lee High School, and attends classes at the Huntsville Center for Technology. His DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and he resides at \_\_\_\_\_. His home telephone number is (256) \_\_\_\_\_. He is 5'9" tall and weighs 140 lbs.

The witness states that the bus was going fast, he turned his head, he heard brakes, the bus started swerving, and they went off the bridge. He says that he lost consciousness, and then awoke with his shoes off, still in his seat. He heard everybody saying to get out of the bus. He saw Yolanda Moore. He noticed that her seat was bent and that she was on the floor. He states that someone helped him out the back door.

He states that the driver of the bus was a new driver, and he felt he was driving fast around curves. He usually rides the short bus with seatbelts.

He sustained a bruised hip, chest pain, contusions to the top of his head, and received 23 stitches below his nose and upper lip. He states that he hit his nose on the seat. He also sustained abrasions on his right shoulder and had been knocked unconscious for a minute or two. He noted that most people were out of the bus before he was, and that it had been quiet on the bus prior to the collision.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
JOSHUA FRANCO**

DATE: November \_\_, 2006\*

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

PRESENT: Joshua Franco, witness; NTSB Investigator Ronald Kaminski  
\_\_\_\_\_r

The witness is a student at Lee High School, and attends classes at the Huntsville Center for Technology. His DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and he resides at \_\_\_\_\_. His home telephone number is (256) \_\_\_\_\_. He is 5'3" tall and weighs 125 lbs.

The witness states that when the bus got on the ramp, a car flew by really fast. Then the bus swerved to the right and then the left. Everyone began screaming as the bus rolled to the right, then they went off the ramp and landed. He states that he was still in his seat. He climbed out the front hatch after opening it. He went to the back of the bus and climbed down from the roof, and then helped others out of the bus.

He sustained contusions to his chest, low back pain, and a cut to his lower lip from his teeth. He states he was leaning over the seatback in front of his as the school bus came to rest.

He states that he has driven with the accident driver before. He states that he usually feels safe on the bus, but that he felt like something would happen that day.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
TIM ARMENT**

DATE: November \_\_, 2006\*

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

PRESENT: Joshua Franco, witness; NTSB Investigator Ronald Kaminski  
\_\_\_\_\_r

The witness is a student at Lee High School, and attends classes at the Huntsville Center for Technology. His DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and he resides at \_\_\_\_\_. His home telephone number is (256) \_\_\_\_\_. He is 5'9" tall and weighs 120 lbs.

The witness states that the school bus was "just driving along" and he heard a bang and felt the bus going over. He states that he grabbed the seat in front of him and held on. He hit his head on the roof of the school bus and fell back into his seat. He started climbing over seatbacks toward the Emergency Door. He states that there were only 3-4 other students outside the bus when he got out.



He sustained compression fractures to T7-8 vertebrae, contusions to his forehead, abrasions to his left \_\_\_\_\_ and left hand.

He states that he's "seen that driver a few times."

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
PHILLIP HINTON**

DATE: November 25, 2006\*

LOCATION: Residence

PRESENT: Phillip Hinton, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and Paula Sind-Prunier; witness's parents

The witness is a student at L \_\_\_\_\_ and attends classes at the Huntsville Center for Technology. His DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and he resides at \_\_\_\_\_, AL. Her home telephone number is \_\_\_\_\_. He is 6'2" tall and weighs 180 lbs.

The witness states that he was sitting on the right side of the bus, perhaps in the third row or fourth row. He was seated with Felicia Collier, and he was sitting near the aisle.

He states that he got on the bus and asked Felicia to scoot over. As they were driving along, an orange car came up, which he assumes was trying to pass the bus. The car hit the bus. The bus began swerving and went off the overpass and flipped. The next thing he remembers, he was in the hospital. He hadn't noticed the orange car before it struck the bus. He was wearing white joggers and a white coat.

He sustained a lacerated spleen, a fracture to his left collarbone, two of his left ribs were fractured, and an abrasion to his right temple. He underwent surgery to repair severe lacerations to his lower lip. He sustained a concussion and head contusions, and was unconscious until he awoke in the hospital.

He states that he has never had any emergency evacuation training for the bus, but had been shown how the windows open.

He does not know how he got off the bus. This was his first time driving with this bus driver. He described the bus driver's speed as "normal"—not too fast, not too slow. He states that he usually rides the bus with Lorita and usually feels safe on the bus. He sometimes drives and rides over to the Tech Center, and other times takes the bus. He doesn't believe traffic is too heavy at that time of day. He didn't notice anything unusual about the bus driver.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
BILIESHA BELVITT**

DATE: November 25, 2006

LOCATION: Residence

PRESENT: Biliesha Belvitt, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and Paula Sind-Prunier; witness's parents

The witness is a student at Lee High School, and attends classes at the Huntsville Center for Technology. Her DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and she resides at \_\_\_\_\_ AL. Her home telephone number is \_\_\_\_\_. She is 5'0" tall and weighs 120 lbs.

The witness states that sat by the emergency exit window on the right side of the bus with Morgan Harkey, in front of Patrice Gopher and Deanna Mitchell. She was seated by the window, Morgan was by the aisle. She does not recall who was in front of or beside her. She was taken to Crestwood Hospital.

She states that she got on the bus, and that because it was cold that morning, many of the students got on the first bus rather than wait for the second bus. She was talking with a friend, as were most of the other students. She states that she saw the car come toward and hit the bus. She hadn't noticed the car before that point. She said the bus started "jerking," "sliding," "skidding" and "went over." She went out the emergency exit. She woke up and everyone in the back of the bus was already out. She states that Samantha Horton was stuck in a seat on the left side of the bus. She states that the bus was hit by the car, and that the car was at an angle. She didn't see anyone get up and attempt to run down the aisle while the bus was still in motion. She ended up in the same seat with Deanna Mitchell, but didn't know whether it was her seat or that of Deanna that they ended up in. She woke up in her seat and her legs were underneath her. She states that Morgan Harkey was beside her and she didn't know where Morgan ended up. She doesn't believe she has driven with this bus driver before. The first indication she had of a problem was when the car hit them.

She states that now one had ever showed the students how to open the emergency windows or doors. This year is her first time riding the bus regularly. She had read the instructions for the operation of the window exits, but had never seen them demonstrated.

She sustained a laceration requiring 5 staples in her head, and an abrasion to her forehead, as well as back and neck pain. She was treated at Crestwood hospital and released by 3 p.m. on the day of the accident.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
TERRENCE FRAZIER**

DATE: November 25, 2006\*

LOCATION: Residence

PRESENT: Terrence Frazier, witness; NTSB Investigators Ronald Kaminski and Paula Sind-Prunier; witness's parents and older sister

The witness is a student at Lee High School, and attends classes at the Huntsville  
His DOB is \_\_\_\_\_, and he resides at \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, AL. His home telephone number is \_\_\_\_\_. He is 5'11"  
tall and weighs 170 lbs.

The witness states that he got on the bus and was talking to Isaac Johnson. The bus started shaking and flipped over. He moved toward the aisle (away from the window) as it did so. He states that he was one of the first students out of the bus, and that the Emergency Exit Door in the rear of the bus was already open. He stopped to help someone before getting out. He believes there were 3 people who got out before he did. He helped Yolanda Moore off the bus, and states that Lakera \_\_\_\_\_ was already out when he exited.

He was transported to Huntsville Hospital. He had a scratch on the middle finger of his right hand. By the next day, he was sore and stiff. His right ankle hurt, as did his left knee, and he had limited range of motion. His parents took him to their family physician the following day for tests, and they are awaiting results.

He states that he has not participated in any evacuation drills on school buses.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
BERT HOWLE**

DATE: November 25, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Public Safety Complex

PRESENT: Officer Bert Howle, witness; NTSB Investigator Paula Sind-Prunier; Sgt. Ed Cain, Huntsville PD

Officer Howle, of the Huntsville Police Department, granted an interview with the NTSB to discuss his knowledge of the initial response to the bus crash.

Officer Howle states that he was on a call at Golf and Memorial Parkway, south of the accident scene, when he was told of the bus crash. He states that he had to drive south then north to get to the scene, and was one of the first three or four officers to arrive. He recalls that the fire department was already there.

Upon approaching the bus wreckage, he observed three females laying on the ground near the right front tire of the bus. He was told that they were deceased, and noted that others were not working on them at that time. He turned around and saw the media coming. He got on the radio and advised others that the media had entered the crash scene, and he helped to suppress the media and secure the scene.

Thereafter, he was able to return his attention to the victims. He advises that a paramedic from Hennessy (phonetic) checked and got a pulse on one of the three girls, and began attempting to restore her breathing with an ambu bag. Officer Howle took over use of the ambu bag while the paramedic prepared and eventually started her on oxygen. Other paramedics arrived to assist, so he then helped place the injured on a back board for transport. He assisted with placing another victim on a backboard, and thereafter, occupied himself with shuttling victims to the waiting ambulances.

He explained that there were several bodies stacked near the doorway of the bus, and the initial responders worked to untangle them and laid them out on the ground further away from the doorway. About that time, the bus started rocking to the right, and they called for a wrecker to help stabilize the wreckage.

He noted that students were walking around near the rear of the bus, and at least one was lying down. He recalled a boy walking around with a towel on his face. He stated that most of those lying down were on their backs, and appeared to have been helped out of the bus, rather than ejected.

The bus was sitting on all four tires when he arrived. He emphasized that his first concern was the children. He recounted that the front door was already opened when he arrived, and bodies were hanging out, possibly as though they were trying to climb out. He did not notice whether the hatches and/or emergency windows had been used by students as they evacuated the bus.

Once the victims had all been transported, he helped to secure the scene. Thereafter, he began unloading the students' personal items from the bus and placing them in a pile.

## **RECORD OF INTERVIEW BOB CORNELISON**

DATE: November 25, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Public Safety Complex

PRESENT: Officer Bob Cornelison, witness; NTSB Investigator Paula Sind-  
Prunier; Sgt. Ed Cain, Huntsville PD

Officer Cornelison, of the Huntsville Police Department, granted an interview with the NTSB to discuss his knowledge of the initial response to the bus crash.

Officer Cornelison was at the Huntsville Public Safety Complex when he was notified of the accident. He states that he arrived about the same time as Ofc. John Citrano. He observed 6-10 students walking around outside the back of the bus. He states that they appeared to be in shock, and some were clearly injured. He told them to lie down to avoid exacerbating their injuries. He then walked around to the front of the bus and observed three victims on the ground outside the entry door, and a boy hanging from the door by his coat. He states that Ofc. Citrano cut the boy down. He states that there were three girls hanging out the door “in a pile.” There was also a girl with significant facial injuries who was trapped in/near the door. There were other students packed in the front of the bus. He checked and found a pulse on one of the girls outside the door, and paramedics arrived and began working on her.

He started unloading students from the bus who were unable to walk. He observed Ofc. Leamon on the bus, doing the same. He went back around the front of the bus to assist in freeing a girl who was entrapped by the door. About that time, the bus began to tip. He called for firefighters to help hold the bus upright, and they brought chocks from the fire trucks to help stabilize the bus and called a wrecker. He then resumed efforts to carry the victims out of the bus and states that the last victim removed from the bus was the girl who was trapped near the door.

He states that the victims were triaged into waiting ambulances. Upon his arrival, he immediately assumed that they had at least three fatalities, and many more wounded, and he radioed the dispatcher, “send everything you got.” He remarked that the rescue resources arrived quickly.

He stated that there might have been a girl lying behind the bus, to the left, but he cannot recall for sure. He states that there was a girl inside the back of the bus with a broken arm who was blocking the door, so they worked to get her out first. Once they helped her off, others walked off through the rear emergency door.

He states that the front door was open and laying on the ground. He didn’t know when the back door was opened. He states that they had to cut the last victim free, near the front of the bus. He noted a black-haired man wearing a cream-colored sweatshirt who helped him hand out victims from the bus—but he has no idea who the man was. (Sgt. Cain then recalled seeing the same gentleman, but also did not know his identity.)

He states that the initial responders could not figure out where the driver was, and kept asking each other, “Where’s the driver?” He figures that the three he saw outside the front door had been ejected, and a fourth would have been ejected if the bus hadn’t crumpled and entrapped her. He referred to a pool of blood just aft of the entry door as indicating her location. He remarked that she had severe facial injuries.

He recalled a girl lying face-down outside the rear of the bus, who said her back was hurting. He noted that they were carrying the victims away from the bus to make clear passage for subsequent rescue efforts.

He believes the different units “did a great job together,” and commented that their performance was even better than during exercises he’d been involved with. If he had to do it over again, he says that he noticed a gate out back that could have been used to get the ambulances in and out just a bit faster. He didn’t believe that the failure to use the gate adversely affected the response, but did comment that it might have made it just a bit smoother.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
RUBEN TAYLOR**

DATE: November 25, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Public Safety Complex

PRESENT: Officer Ruben Taylor, witness; NTSB Investigator Paula Sind-  
Prunier; Sgt. Ed Cain, Huntsville PD

Officer Taylor, of the Huntsville Police Department, granted an interview with the NTSB to discuss his knowledge of the initial response to the bus crash.

Officer Taylor has 17 years with the Huntsville Police Department. He was working another wreck off Memorial Parkway near University Drive when he received the call for assistance. When he arrived, he saw other officers helping people off the bus. He helped cover the victims with blankets, and assisted in removing the victim who was entrapped near the front door. He then worked to secure the scene.

After they freed the girl who had been entrapped, she was placed on a stretcher. He said it was heavy, and he noted that she didn’t look very good. Although he is unsure which victim she was, he thought it might have been Ford.

He thought the emergency response went well, and felt they certainly did the best they could. He pointed to the congestion of the fire trucks as the only area for improvement. Because of where the fire trucks had been parked, other emergency response vehicles had to maneuver around them. He states that Lt. Pendergraf “took charge and everyone else fell in line.” He has not participated in any exercises with the police department, but had done so with the military.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW  
PHILLIP LEHMAN**

DATE: November 25, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Public Safety Complex

PRESENT: Officer Phillip Lehman, witness; NTSB Investigator Paula Sind-  
Prunier; Sgt. Ed Cain, Huntsville PD

Officer Lehman, of the Huntsville Police Department, granted an interview with the NTSB to discuss his knowledge of the initial response to the bus crash.

Officer Lehman has 16 years with the Huntsville Police Department. He was at Bob Wallace and Memorial Parkway when he received notification of the accident. He states that he ran code to get there. When he arrived, Ofc. Citrano had just arrived and the first fire truck was pulling in. He was the second law enforcement officer to arrive.

He went to the front of the bus. He observed four victims outside the bus and determined that there was nothing he could do for them. He states that there was a white male with a beard who had already boarded the back of the bus, and was screaming for help. He helped remove a heavy-set black female from the rear doorway, and states that 7-10 students followed quickly off the bus under their own power. He went inside and there were 3 females and 2 males still in the front of the bus. One of the females was able to get free after they helped remove one of the male victims from atop her. He carried her out. Within 3-5 minutes, the first ambulances began arriving and they got back boards and loaded a thin-set black male with a broken arm, leg, and hip. He then helped load a second black male and then came around and helped free another from the seats. He noted that the first two rows of seats on the right side had collapsed together. They were able to free the boy without cutting the seats. He noted that there was a female entrapped and unconscious. They brought in a saw to cut her free. She was placed on a back board and taken out. She had severe facial and head injuries.

He states that there were at least 15 students outside the bus and about half appeared dazed but were walking around when he walked up to the rear of the bus.

He notes that there was a gate on Mills (phonetic) Street, and believes that had it been used, things "might have gone just a tad bit smoother." He believes there were about 41 people transported in about 55 minutes, which he feels is very good.

After they removed the last victim from the bus, he helped carry her to an ambulance, and then assisted in removing the students' personal effects from the bus. Thereafter, he assisted in securing the scene.

## **RECORD OF INTERVIEW JOHN CITRANO**

DATE: November 25, 2006

LOCATION: Huntsville Public Safety Complex

PRESENT: Officer John Citrano, witness; NTSB Investigator Paula Sind-  
Prunier; Sgt. Ed Cain, Huntsville PD

Officer Citrano, of the Huntsville Police Department, granted an interview with the NTSB to discuss his knowledge of the initial response to the bus crash.

Officer Citrano has been with the Huntsville Police Department for about 17-1/2 years. He had just left the Public Safety Complex when he got the call. He states that it was initially unclear where the accident was, but once he was told it was Church Street, he arrived and was waved into the scene.

He went to the front of the bus initially, and observed four subjects near the doorway on the ground outside. It was clear that two of the girls on the ground had been ejected, and neither was breathing. A third girl, who was not on the ground, was still breathing—but her breathing was labored. The two on the ground were moved away to gain access to the surviving victims. He observed a boy hanging from the doorway frame by his jacket. He states that the boy was conscious and talking. He cut the boy down with a pocketknife and told him to stay calm. By then, everyone was arriving and there were still 5-7 people still on the bus, including an injured female at the very back of the bus. Most of the other victims seemed to have no life-threatening injuries. They removed a girl who was blocking the back door—she was sitting in a guy's lap, blocking the exit. He went from back to front and found the worst injured.

He states that most of the victims were already off the bus when he got to the back, so he is unsure how they got off and whether they were able to do so alone or only with assistance. He states that a third girl was pulled out from the front of the bus and intubated; a fourth was still on the bus until the very end.

He states that there was a lot of help, and the only problem he noticed was that they ran out of ambulances—but by that time, the only victims awaiting transport were Priority 2. They got the rest of the victims on backboards and stabilized, and the ambulances were arriving quickly thereafter.

He states that he never saw actual “door” at the front of the bus—only the opening. He noted that the four broken windows on the driver's side of the bus were deliberately broken post-accident, when the wrecker tried to stabilize the bus with cables and used the window frames to attach the cables. He states that the high fence surrounding the scene helped to keep onlookers out. He was surprised that more students were not killed, and that all of the seats remained firmly anchored. He stayed until the end, around 1:50 p.m.

## **RECORD OF INTERVIEW KENNETH BURKE**

Interviewed 11-26-06 at HEMSI Ambulance Service station house  
Kenneth Burke is the Field Supervisor/Paramedic for HEMSI Ambulance Service station house

According to Mr. Burke, after receiving the call he immediately went to the scene and arrived at the same time as the Medic 12 ambulance. Upon arrival, he recalled seeing a pile of bodies near the front-loading door of the bus. He estimated that there were 6 students in the pile. He did not know if they were ejected there or pulled out by other first responders. Initially he thought they were all deceased but after checking he instructed the other firefighter/EMT's to sort through them and start triage. He then walked towards the back and saw a large group of passengers. He then entered the bus through the rear emergency door and saw another firefighter already on the bus tending to



4 or 5 other passengers. It was at this point he realized that at least 2 passengers were entrapped in the first 2 rows on the passenger side. He said that as he helped triage an injured passenger on the bus the Huntsville/Madison County Rescue came onto the bus to start the extrication process. At that point he said he exited the bus and started helping triage other injured passengers and package them for transport.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW**  
**JOSEPH DONOGHUE**

Interviewed 11-27-06 at the Holiday Inn Downtown  
Joseph Donoghue is the director of the Huntsville/Madison County Rescue squad

According to Mr. Donoghue, the initial call stated that the accident was on the Parkway but then another call came in stating that the bus was below the Parkway, under the bridge, near Church Street.

As he pulled up he noticed a lot of activity near the front of the bus. He saw HFD firefighter Albright working on a boy whose legs were partially under a girl. Mr. Donoghue immediately went and helped the firefighter triage and packaged the passenger for transport. Afterwards he went back to his truck and retrieved a saws-all and himself and another HMCR officer went in the bus. When he got in he saw 2 HFD FF/EMT's already on board and was followed by an HPD officer.

The first passenger he saw was a male on the floor behind the driver's seat and need help getting up due to his injuries. After getting that passenger on a backboard and removing him, he proceeded to start the extrication of a male and female in the first 2 rows on the right side. The male was stuck in the first row and the female stuck in the second row. Both passengers were stuck between damaged seat back. The HPD officer gave him a knife and he cut the vinyl seats. They then attempted to use a spreader but that was unsuccessful so they proceeded to use the saws-all to cut the seat frames of both seat backs near the aisle. They used backboards to first remove the male and then the female. At that point he exited the bus and started helping triage the other injured passengers.

**RECORD OF INTERVIEW**  
**STEVEN BRITTON**

Interviewed 11-27-06 at the Holiday Inn Downtown  
Steven Britton is a Captain for the Huntsville Fire Department

Mr. Britton said the initial call gave 2 different locations. He said dispatch informed him to report to the Church Street scene. Upon arriving at the scene, HFD Cpt. Russell Smith was already on scene near the front of the bus. He also observed a HEMS ambulance on scene.

He initially went to Cpt. Smith and asked him what he needed to do and Cpt. Smith instructed him to check out the inside of the bus. Mr. Britton stated he retrieved his extrication tools and proceed into the bus. Simultaneously he called another FF and

instructed her to respond to help him. According to Mr. Britton as he entered the bus he saw 3 individuals near the front of the bus, 2 males and a female. He said the male on the left side behind the driver's seat was injured and could not exit the bus without assistance. The male and female on the right side were mechanically entrapped by the bent seat backs. He stated that the male was seated and the female was almost standing up. They initially tried using the spreaders but this didn't work well enough so they proceeded to use a saws-all and cut the seat frames near the aisle and remove the 2 passengers. After completing the extrication he exited the bus and started helping other injured passengers.